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WORLD PRESS

LONDON (AP) -- REAGAN ADMINISTRATION RESTRICTIONS ON NEWS GATHERING POSE A "POTENTIALLY SERIOUS LOSS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY," THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE SAID TODAY IN ITS ANNUAL SURVEY OF PRESS FREEDOM.

IT ALSO REPORTED AN "OMINOUS" TREND WAS DEVELOPING IN BRITAIN, CANADA AND SPAIN.

"THE WHOLE SITUATION HAS CONTINUED TO DETERIORATE," IPI DIRECTOR PETER GALLINER WROTE IN A SUMMARY OF THE WORLDWIDE MEDIA WATCHDOG GROUP'S ANNUAL PRESS FREEDOM REVIEW.

IN THE UNITED STATES, THE SURVEY CITED AS RESTRICTIVE THE ENDING OF UNCLASSIFIED BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS FOR REPORTERS BY THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND THE CLOSING OFF OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STAFF TO REPORTERS.

THE INSTITUTE SAID THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION "APPEARS TO HAVE ADOPTED A PRESS RELATIONS POLICY CONSIDERABLY TOUGHER AND MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN THOSE OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS IN A BID TO SHUT OFF LEAKS ON NATIONAL SECURITY MATTERS."

GALLINER NOTED THESE TRENDS IN CANADA, SPAIN AND BRITAIN:

-- THE PROPOSAL BY CANADA'S KENT ROYAL COMMISSION ON NEWSPAPER CONCENTRATION TO SET UP A PRESS RIGHTS PANEL TO MONITOR NEWSPAPERS' PERFORMANCE AND "EXERCISE SUPERIOR COURT POWERS" OVER THE MEDIA.

-- LAWS INTRODUCED BY THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT EMPOWERING IT TO "CLOSE ANY NEWSPAPER OR RADIO STATION THAT DEFENDS TERRORISM." GALLINER SAID "DEFEND" WAS "THEIR WORD FOR ANYTHING THAT GOES AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL LINE."

-- THE CONTEMPT OF COURT ACT INTRODUCED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, "A WIDELY DESPISED LAW THAT PUTS CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON REPORTERS AND EDITORS COVERING THE MOST BASIC OF TRIALS." THE LAW MAKES IT ILLEGAL FOR JURORS TO TALK TO REPORTERS AND GIVES JUDGES BROADER POWERS TO LIMIT REPORTING.

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